

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for compressing a bone graft between adjacent vertebrae, comprising:

a spinal fixation device including first and second discrete plates having openings for cooperation with fasteners to secure the plates to respective vertebrae on opposite sides of the bone graft;

said first and second plates having interlocking elements cooperable to enable progressive advancement of the plates toward one another and to lock the plates to one another in a plurality of advanced positions precluding movement of the plates away from one another for progressively compressing the bone graft between the adjacent vertebrae.

2. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said plates are interlocked in said positions in response to movement of said plates toward one another.

3. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said interlocking elements include ratchet teeth cooperable between said first and second plates, respectively.

4. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said first plate has a male projection and said second plate includes a female recess for receiving the male projection, margins of said male projection and said female recess having said interlocking elements therealong cooperable to preclude the first and second plates from movement away from one another in each said plurality of advanced positions.

5. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 4 wherein said male projection includes a pair of legs with a slot therebetween enabling said legs to flex toward and away from one another.

6. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said interlocking elements include a plurality of projections carried by said first plate and a plurality of recesses carried by said second plate, and means for biasing said projections laterally relative to said recesses enabling movement of the first and second plates toward one another while preventing movement of said first and second plates away from one another.

7. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 1 ~~7~~ wherein said first plate has a male projection and said second plate includes a female recess for receiving the male projection, margins of said male projection and said female recess having said interlocking elements therealong cooperable to prevent the first and second plates from movement away from one another in each said plurality of advanced positions, said projections being carried along opposite sides of said male projection and said recesses being formed along opposite sides of the female recess.

8. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 1 including a stop cooperable between said first and second plates for preventing movement of said first and second plates toward one another in response to obtaining a predetermined advanced position of said plates relative to one another.

9. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said first and second plates are curved in directions normal to one another.

10. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein said plates are aligned with one another in the direction of movement of the plates toward one another, and a guide carried by one of said first and second plates and cooperable with a guide carried by another of said first and second plates to prevent displacement of said plates relative to one another in a direction tending to misalign said plates.

11. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 10 wherein said guide on one of said plates includes a channel along a margin of said one plate, another of said plates having a margin engageable in said channel.

12. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for compressing a bone graft between adjacent vertebrae, comprising:

a spinal fixation device including first and second discrete plates;

said first and second plates having interlocking elements cooperable, when said plates are secured to the respective vertebrae in an initial position relative to one another, to enable advancement of the plates toward one another and to lock the plates

to one another in at least one advanced position precluding movement of the plates away from one another for compressing the bone graft between the adjacent vertebrae.

13. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 12 wherein said plates are interlocked in said one advanced position in response to movement of said plates toward one another.

14. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 12 wherein said interlocking elements include ratchet teeth cooperable between said first and second plates.

15. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 12 wherein said first plate has a male projection and said second plate includes a female recess for receiving the male projection, margins of said male projection and said female recess having said interlocking elements therealong cooperable with one another to enable advancement of the plates toward one another into a plurality of advanced positions and to preclude the first and second plates from movement away from one another in each said advanced position.

16. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 15 wherein said male projection includes a pair of legs with a slot therebetween enabling said legs to flex toward and away from one another.

17. (Withdrawn) Apparatus according to Claim 12 wherein said interlocking elements include a plurality of projections carried by said first plate and a plurality of

recesses carried by said second plate, and means for biasing said projections laterally relative to said recesses enabling movement of the first and second plates toward one another while preventing movement of said first and second plates away from one another.

18. (Withdrawn) Apparatus according to Claim 17 wherein said first plate has a male projection and said second plate includes a female recess for receiving the male projection, margins of said male projection and said female recess having said interlocking elements therealong cooperable to prevent the first and second plates from movement away from one another in said one advanced position, said projections being carried along opposite sides of said male projection and said recesses being formed along opposite sides of the female recess.

19. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 12 wherein said plates are aligned with one another in the direction of movement of the plates toward one another, and a guide carried by one of said first and second plates and cooperable with a guide carried by another of said first and second plates to prevent displacement of said plates relative to one another in a direction tending to misalign said plates.

20. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 19 wherein said guide on one of said plates includes a channel along a margin of said one plate, another of said plates having a margin engageable in said channel, said first and second plates being curved in directions normal to one another.

21. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for compressing a bone graft between adjacent vertebrae, comprising:

a spinal fixation device including first and second discrete plates having openings for cooperation with fasteners to secure the plates to respective vertebrae on opposite sides of the bone graft;

said first and second plates having interlocking elements cooperable to enable progressive displacement of the plates relative to one another in a first direction to shorten the distance between the openings of the respective plates and to lock the plates to one another in a plurality of progressively displaced positions precluding movement of the plates in a second direction opposite said first direction for progressively compressing the bone graft between the adjacent vertebrae.

22. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 21 wherein said plates are interlocked in said positions in response to movement of said plates toward one another.

23. (Previously Presented) Apparatus according to Claim 21 wherein said interlocking elements include ratchet teeth cooperable between said first and second plates, respectively.